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Wildlife Alumni Network News



Spring 2015

Department Update – Dr. Micaela Szykman Gunther

Greetings HSU Wildlife Program Alumni! I am pleased to write my first State of the Wildlife Department Update for the CUAA. I recently took over from Matt Johnson as the Chair of the Department, and we have had an excellent year. We report record numbers of students in the Wildlife major just starting out (over 125) and overall (topping out at 474), prompting the addition of extra sections of many of our classes to accommodate growing interest in the Wildlife field. We graduated over 100 students, a majority of whom will be entering the work force in wildlife-related disciplines. And our Conclave team enjoyed another great showing in their competitions at the regional and national conferences two first-place finishes for the year. We are very proud of our Wildlife students.

This past year we welcomed two new tenure-track faculty members: Daniel Barton and Tim Bean. They are replacing retired faculty members T. Luke George and Richard Golightly. Dan Barton's expertise lies in the areas of life history evolution and population ecology; Tim Bean specializes in historical ecology and species distribution models of small mammals. Both are strong quantitative ecologists, have great interest in species management and conservation, and are well liked by our students.

We continue to honor long-standing members of our faculty as we recognize two HSU Distinguished Faculty Awardees: Mark Colwell as Outstanding Professor for 2012-13 and Jeff Black as Scholar of the year 2013-14. Together, these two have provided over 40 years of service to the University and to our students and publishing hundreds of scholarly papers and several books between them over their illustrious careers. They also have mentored many students in the classroom and in the field through their local research projects on snowy plovers, Steller's jays and a variety of geese, among other species.

We are grateful for all the contributions from alumni that have supported our students in various ways: providing scholarship funds, jobs, mentorship, etc. With your donations, we have recently initiated a Wildlife Alumni-supported field internship that will provide

modest support for four wildlife students to get field experience in the summer. See below for additional details on contributing further to this effort.

Thanks for your continued support of our students, faculty and program.

2013 Reunion

Nearly 50 wildlifers got together at our reunion on campus. All had a great time. We look forward to the next opportunity to all get together.



Changes for Wildlife Alumni

Last year the university restructured and consolidated its alumni relations into Humboldt Forever. This provides a great deal of benefits for some of the majors that did not already have strong alumni engagement, but this change at the university level carried with it some changes for Wildlife Alumni. The consolidation of alumni activities within the university means that chapters of the former Alumni Association no longer exist, i.e., The Wildlife Chapter of the Alumni Association no longer exists. There were two options presented for Wildlife Alumni: to operate under the auspices of Humboldt Forever or to form an alumni organization independent of the University.

A tremendous amount of effort has been put into the Wildlife Alumni Association (known under several names) over the years, and we wanted to carry on our nearly 5-decade history as an alumni organization. We would like to be able to raise funds directly for the Wildlife Department and more importantly, its students. We want to maintain more autonomy with Wildlife Alumni activities.

At the Wildlife Alumni meeting, during the Wildlife Society Western Section Conference in Santa Rosa, there was overwhelming support for moving forward as an independent alumni organization. To do this, we have revived our official non-profit status. The University has provided us all with many opportunities and fond memories. We plan and look forward to working with Humboldt Forever to support alumni and students alike. If you are interested in helping with the Humboldt Wildlife Alumni Network, contact Michelle at MustelaMichellea@gmail.com. If you want to make donations directly to the Wildlife Department, see below. If you would like to learn about the University's new alumni program and stay up-to-date on its activities, visit forever.humboldt.edu.

Meet the Wildlife Alumni Network Presidents

Hello, my name is Terra Fuller, a Humboldt State (HSU) Alumna with my B.S. in Natural Resources in Watershed Management (2000) and a M.S. in Wildlife Management (2008). After receiving my B.S. degree, I spent most of my time doing stream surveys in Tahoe National Forest and high mountain lake surveys in the central Sierras and Trinity Alps; I still can't believe I got paid! From this field experience, I wanted to learn more about amphibians and was able to get a position at Redwood Science Laboratory in the herpetology lab. This experience led to my thesis work: floating the Trinity River documenting amphibians and reptiles. Yes again, I got paid! After graduate school, I went to work for the Department of Fish and Wildlife (2007-2013) where I reviewed Timber Harvest Plans, Streambed Alteration Permits, water rights and coastal development permits. I continually try to further my education by being involved in citizen monitoring projects for nesting cormorants and black oyster catchers, attend the Western Section Wildlife Society's annual conferences and when appropriate take classes at our local junior college. I just completed a rare plant class. I recently changed State agencies and got a job at State Parks Mendocino District. In taking this position, I want to learn more about project management, project budgeting and hope to accomplish restoration projects. In my spare time: I like to garden, hike, and coach the J.V. volleyball team. As a future Humboldt Wildlife Alumni President, I'm looking forward to Alumni outreach, networking, and staying involved with the Western Section Wildlife Society.

Michelle Schroeder – Originally from Ohio, I moved to Arcata to enroll in Humboldt's reputable wildlife program. While at Humboldt, I was active in Wildlife Conclave and Conservation Unlimited. After graduation in 2008, I had the opportunity to work on various field projects ranging from pygmy rabbits in Idaho, to elephants in South Africa. Conducting behavioral research on wild African elephants for the Smithsonian for the better part of a year was undoubtedly a dream come true, and an experience I will cherish forever. Since 2011, I have been working as a biologist for Sierra Pacific Industries where I am fortunate enough to spend most of my days surveying for rare plants and animals in the Sierras. One of the highlights of my current position is participating in a fisher (*Pekania pennanti*) translocation project, a cooperative project between SPI, USFWS, CDFW, and North Carolina State University. I currently reside in Chico, CA. When not working, I'm usually off running, mountain biking, or backpacking. The amazing staff and environment at HSU gave me a great foundation to pursue my career goals and I look forward to continuing my involvement through Humboldt Wildlife Alumni.

Summer field opportunities for wildlife students - supported by YOUR donations.

Help less-experienced wildlife students gain valuable field experience by making contributions to the Wildlife Department Trust. Your donations will directly support students for field internships with Department Faculty. We aim to award four \$1,000 internships each summer. You may send checks to: The Wildlife Department (note "Wildlife Department Trust" clearly on check), 1 Harpst St, Arcata, CA, 95521. **THANK YOU!** If you have any questions, contact Dept Chair Micaela Gunther (ms147@humboldt.edu) or Coordinator Katherine Moon (kbm1@humboldt.edu) for more information.

First Annual Wildlife Science Symposium – Dr. Tim Bean

On May 9, 2014 the Wildlife Department, in association with the North Coast Chapter of the Wildlife Society, Conservation Unlimited, and the Wildlife Graduate Student Society, held a one day Science Symposium. The goal of the Symposium was to increase collaboration and communication among all of the people doing diverse, active research around the north coast. We had over 80 attendees, including HSU undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, and local professionals (including many Wildlife alums). The Symposium was timed to coincide with the spring poster session for senior projects and honor's theses, giving our graduating seniors an opportunity to show off their skills to potential employers. We had 16, 15-minute talks, covering a range of topics including dune restoration, Cascades frogs, artificial boxes for martens, the environmental effects of legal and illegal cannabis grows, and corvid habitat use in relation to snowy plovers. Brook Berger won the prize for best student presentation for her work on deer hair loss syndrome. This will be an annual event, and we would love to see more HSU alums attending and presenting their research. The next Symposium will be held on May 1, 2015.

Alumni Scholarship

In 2011 we began awarding scholarships to undergraduates in the Wildlife program. We recently caught up with the three award recipients to see where they have been since receiving the scholarship and where they are headed.

Kate Howard 2011 Recipient - I couldn't have been more honored than to receive the Alumni Scholarship my last semester at Humboldt. I hadn't even started at the university as a Wildlife major; I transferred as an Anthropology student. After one semester I realized it wasn't a good fit, and discovered I happened to be at a university with an outstanding Wildlife department. It really was the perfect fit; as an undergrad I got numerous amazing experiences including volunteering at Humboldt Bay Bird Observatory, and after graduating it was one awesome job after another. Banding raptors for the Golden Gate Raptor Observatory, banding in Saipan for Institute for Bird Populations, working in Michigan doing radio telemetry on pest birds in orchards, and finally, I am finishing my Masters' working on Black-shouldered Kites in Swaziland sugarcane fields. After having a chance to see other wildlife programs and meet other wildlife grads, I realize our program and faculty really are a step above, and we are the lucky ones who reap the benefits.

Emily Heeszel 2012 Recipient - Born and raised in Los Angeles, in a family of city slickers, whose idea of wilderness is the city park down the road, I really had no clue what I was getting into when I transferred to Humboldt State to study Wildlife and Art studio. I quickly found that it was everything I had ever wanted, it was me, and it was where I belonged. I packed on the classes, trying to balance my brain with art and science. Winning the Alumni award, just in perfect timing, I was able to scrape by, finishing both degrees and graduating with honors. In just two months time, I got a job in Texas working with a renowned sea turtle conservation program. There, I saved enough money to then travel to Cambodia, where I volunteered on a secluded island for six weeks in back country conditions working in marine conservation. Currently, I am using my skills and knowledge of metalsmithing in conjunction with my love and passion for nature and conservation issues, to start a jewelry business. PinkArrow jewelry will attempt at spreading appreciation for the natural world as well as open up a conversation and awareness for environmental and conservation issues. Without Humboldt, and perhaps without this award, I would have not had these incredible experiences, met the amazingly inspiring people I have, or have access to the skills and knowledge I would need to make my dreams a reality. I am also working as a social media marketer for an educational science show teaching kids about bugs! The show is called Big Bites, its filming right now and should be airing next year.

Emily Thorne 2013 Recipient - When I first set foot in the Humboldt State University Wildlife and Fisheries building, I never expected to have such a fun, exciting, and incredible experience. In my time there I have the privilege to learn from some of the most dedicated and remarkable professors, I have made lifelong friends, and I have grown as a person and a biologist. There is no doubt that the HSU Wildlife Department cares about its students. When I was awarded the Wildlife Society Alumni Scholarship, I felt honored to accept the scholarship and incredibly grateful. This scholarship helped me purchase textbooks and other supplies that were vital to finishing my undergraduate education. Now that I have graduated, and my Humboldt experience has come to a close, I can look back and know I could not have made a better choice than to go to HSU. Currently I am in a Master's program at Virginia Tech working with eastern spotted skunks and I have brought everything I learned at HSU with me.